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Conf Tracts - [No. 7]

A TRACT FOR THE ARMY.

BY WM. C. BUCK.

ARE YOU A BACKSLIDER?

Did you once profess allegiance to Christ, assume to be a christian and unite yourself to the people of God in church relation? Did you submit to the ordinance of baptism, and take on you the solemn vows of a disciple of Christ and of the fellowship of the saints; and have you since alienated yourself from Messiah, overtly renounced your allegiance to the Saviour, violated these solemn vows, contemned the fellowship of the saints, made the wicked your associates and confidents, deflected from the path of rectitude and become a practical offender against the laws of Christ, and a shameless contemner of righteousness and all good men? If so, then are you a *backslider?*

Alas! you have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn to yourself broken cisterns that can hold no water of life. Ah! you have put the Saviour to open shame and counted his precious Blood, wherewith you were sanctified, an unholy thing; and in your present wicked course you are, virtually, trampling that precious blood under your impious feet. O, how can you escape the damnation of hell? Awake, awake from your delusion. Rouse yourself to a consciousness of your true condition, and seek to recover yourself from the snare of the devil.

Come let us reason together. Tell me, how can you

thus requite the love of God, who gave his holy Son to suffer and die for you? O, how can you thus contemn the love and compassion of that blessed son of God who humbled himself to the shame and agony of the cross to redeem you from the penalty of God's violated law, and to prepare for you a mansion in heaven? Let shame cover your face. Let remorse seize upon your guilty soul, and heart-broken penitence urge you to the foot of the cross for mercy; it may be that your case is not hopeless.

It may be, however, that you never were a truly converted soul. You may have been deceived, and deemed yourself a christian when you were not. You may never have had any change of heart; and may be now only following the natural propensities of your unsanctified and carnal heart. It may be that you never have felt the evil of an inherently corrupt and depraved heart; never realized the evil nature of sin and its offensiveness to God; nor the justice of God in your condemnation as a sinner. You set out merely to escape the punishment due to sin, and felt no solicitude to be delivered from sin itself. You dreaded God's wrath and sought to avoid the penalty of his violated law; but you had no *love* for God, His holy character nor his law. You were conscious that you had acted wickedly, and supposed that when you had reformed your life, and lived morally, that you were a religious person; but you never realized that you were *inherently* depraved, and that your whole heart and soul must be renewed by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, before you could love God and exercise vital faith in Christ. You never felt that you were so utterly *lost* and *helpless*, as a sinner, that unless the righteousness of Christ was imputed to you by him, as an act of pure grace, that you must perish forever; no, you regarded all your sins to consist in acts, and thought you had a good heart; that reformation was all that was

necessary, and that you were able to reform at any time; and this is all the religion you have ever had. When, therefore, you made a profession of religion, you were as "the sow that was washed;' and now you are as the "sow that has returned to wallowing in the mire again." The nature of the animal was never changed, only her circumstances; and so it is with you. When you reformed and made a profession of religion, you were like the man out of whom the evil spirit went; and now you are like him after that evil spirit returned with seven other spirts more wicked than himself. See Mat., 12: 43. Mark it, the evil spirit was not cast out by a stronger than he; for had he been cast out, he could not have returned, as to his own house, at his own option.

Though you have been thus deceived and misled, your case may not be utterly hopeless. God is gracious, and it may be that He will yet have mercy on you, if you haste as a penitent to Christ. O, be entreated to stop in your downward course. No longer harden your heart and stiffen your neck against God. O. repent of your sins and seek to know God and Jesus Christ his son before it is too late.

But it may be that you were really a converted person, and have been led away by evil associates and the corrupting influences by which you have been surrounded; so that you have fallen into practical sin, have neglected prayer, dishonored your saviour and opened the mouths of the impious to reproach religion and to blaspheme the holy name by which you were called. Ah, you have pierced your own soul through with many sorrows! O, my brother, I come to call you back from your estrangement—to recover you from your fall. Will you heed a brother's affectionate counsel? O, think of the height from which you have fallen, and tremble at your folly and your guilt. Yes, you have cause to repent in sack-cloth and ashes, in

view of your impiety and ingratitude to that Saviour who shed his blood for your redemption. O, how could you thus forsake that adorable and loving Saviour? How could you turn your back upon him who lived and died to save you from the wrath to come; and who sent his holy spirit to enlighten and sanctify you, and to comfort you with hopes of a blessed immortality beyond the grave? Will you still continue a guilty apostate from Christ, and by your shameful and wicked course open the Saviour's wounds afresh? "O, wanderer, return, return and seek an injured Saviour's love." If you ever were a converted person, God will recover you from your present estrangement; but O, what stripes await you—what bitterness of soul you will realize—what scalding tears you will shed, when you are brought to a just sense of your guilty wanderings from God. It is said that Peter was always moved to tears, in all his after life, whenever he heard a cock crow, because he was reminded thereby that he had denied his Lord and Master; and so will it be with you. Your present aberrations will plant thorns in your dying pillow. God may graciously forgive all these sins, but if a christian you can never forget them. O, then, cease to accumulate sorrows to yourself, and to treasure up groans and tears for the dying hour. If you are never recovered to the love of Christ, then you furnish indubitable proof that you have been either a hypocrite or a deceived person from the beginning; and must be born again, or perish forever.

But perhaps, my brother, God has already restored you to your right mind, and you may now be in deep agony and penitence on account of your recent backslidings. Your sins may now rise up like mountains before you, and seem entirely to separate you from God. O, you have wept over your folly, and repented of your sins, your ingratitude, your carnality and worldly mindedness; but the Lord still hides his face

from you. You have confessed and renounced your sins, and at the mercy seat plead for pardon; but there seems to be no mercy for you. Your sins seem to be so enormous, so aggravated, so heinous to you and in God s sight; and your present convictions so pungent, that you have come to the conclusion that surely you never could have been a converted soul. You think a converted person never could have done so badly as you have. Ah, you think that you never felt such deep and pungent convictions before; and this may be so, but still it does not follow that you may not have been a truly converted person, before you had so grossly deflected from the law of God. Many, many restored backsliders have I known, who had come to such conclusions about themselves, and sought re-baptism, under the impression that they had been converted since their first baptism. I hope that this little Tract will fall into the hands of such persons, as it may be the means, under God, of correcting their mistakes, consequent upon the appearance of things. I offer the following solution of such cases of conscience, that the persons concerned may be led to a just conception of the truth, and find solid consolation in its hearty reception. In a criminal prosecution, the attorney for the State has the right to commence the development of the case at any point he may choose, so as to present the entire case to the court and jury in the clearest point of light possible; but at whatever point he may choose to open the case, his object and intention is to fully develop the whole case, so that the law may be fully vindicated and guilt punished. It must also be understood that, Executive clemency can reach the case of the condemned criminal, only. A criminal uncondemned cannot be pardoned. If when fairly tried by the laws of his country, he is not found guilty, *he is acquitted;* not pardoned. But if found guilty, and the sentence of law has been pronounced against him, the Executive

may issue a *pardon*, and arrest the execution of the sentence. And, when thus pardoned, his life can never be jeoparded again for the same crimes.

Now let it be understood that, in a gospel sense, every pardoned sinner has been absolutely, personally and judicially tried by the law of God, before the high court of heaven, for all his crimes and offences against the law and the majesty of the Divine Government.—Moreover, that he was found guilty, and that he was pardoned, only through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, after he was fully convicted of the divine justice in his condemnation. When, therefore, he has been freely and graciously pardoned, it is manifest that he will never be arrested again, under the law of God, for the sins for which he had obtained pardon.

I say that the sinner, in being brought to Christ, under the economy of the gospel passes the ordeal of a distinct, definite and full adjudication of the claims of the law of God upon him; and that when pardoned, he never will be brought to trial again, either in this life or in the life to come. God brings a sinner into judgment but once, and his decisions are final and unreversable.

The sinner is arrested by the Holy Spirit. The process of trial may be opened at any point in the case. The Holy Spirit may first discover to the sinner the deep depravity of his heart, or he may, first of all, array before him the enormity of his life and habits. It is immaterial at what point in the case the investigation begins; God intends that the sinner shall see his whole case. His *inherent* and *practical* sins must all be arrayed before him, and he must be brought to see and fully concur in the justice of his *condemnation*, before a pardon can issue in his favor. In whatever way the investigation may be opened or prosecuted, this fact must be noted, that sooner or later, the sinner will be brought to regard his *inherent corruptions*, his *innate*

hostility to God, his *heart-sins*, as the most flagrant of his offences; and as requiring, most of all, the pardoning grace of God. Now, should his natural and inherent guilt be pardoned, it is most certain that they never will be nor can be charged against him again. God never will bring him into judgment for original sin again.

Now mark it, backslider. Should such a pardoned sinner restrain prayer and be led off to sin—should he backslide and dishonor his profession, and reproach the name of Christ by his impious life, God will bring him back, either by the wooings of special love or by the rod and stripes; and when restored to his proper mind, his sins of life, his acts of disobedience may recoil like a mountain weight upon his heart; and he may feel so deeply and pungently convicted for them, as to be led to fear that he never knew the grace of God, but had been deceived. If, however, he will carefully and prayerfully examine the various exercises of his mind and the several states of his conscience, he will perceive that, as a backslider, he is not convicted for his inherent sins—the original sin of his fallen nature, which formed so prominent a part of his first convictions. Nor is he convicted for any sin committed before his backsliding. His present convictions refer only to the sins committed in his recent deflection from the path of duty. And if he finds this to be true, then has he positive evidence, however pungent his conviction may be, that he was previously a renewed and pardoned sinner; and that he is now only being chastised, as a son, to bring him back to his Heavenly Father, from whom he has so deeply revolted. God has assured us that, although He will not utterly take away his loving kindness from his children, he will, nevertheless, visit their subsequent iniquities with stripes and their transgressions with a rod. While, therefore, a sinner pardoned, has all his sins "covered" by that act of gr

still, God as a gracious Father, visits their subsequent transgressions with convictions and correctives, to keep them from the ways of sin, and to keep them near his own paternal side.

If a backslider is subsequently convicted for original sin as well as for practical impiety, he may take it for granted that he never knew the pardoning love of God; *for God never tries a sinner twice for the same crime.*

And now, my backsliding reader, having given you a graphic outline of a christian's experience, and a scriptural rule, by which you may unerringly determine the state of your soul and the ground of your hope, let me entreat you to read it prayerfully and carefully. And may God sanctify these humble pages to your recovery from sin, and to your consolation in Christ the Redeemer. Amen.

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